1: Nimuendaju E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SO8 Timbira SO8



133 in the watersheds, where a tougher stratum of rock offered more vigorous resistance to weathering. Seldom does the elevation of these *serras* exceed a hundred meters above the valley bottom, and everywhere it remains below three hundred meters above sea level. Notwithstanding their insignificance, however, these hills have played a great part in Timbira history, since their steep walls formed natural forts to which the Indians retreated on the approach of enemies.

There is no statement concerning Timbira tribes ever inhabiting the low coastal steppes of Maranhão, which are periodically exposed to inundations; but the more northerly tribes of this branch did formerly share the lake region, well stocked with fish, that extends on both sides of the lower Pindaré, Grajahú, and Mearim. However, the true home of the Timbira people lies in the arid steppe: only there—not in the primeval Amazonian forests—was it possible for the peculiar Timbira culture to evolve.

[182]

132 The climate is noticeably drier than in the adjacent Amazonian area. Unlike the territory farther east and southeast, the country does not suffer the terrors of a drought, yet there is a definite dry season from July until December. This sharp division into a rainy and a dry period affects not only economic but also social life.

Naturally on cloudless days the tropical heat from the sun is intense in the open steppe, and after noon the sand grows so hot that even Indians cannot stand on it with comfort. But after midnight the temperature often drops to such an extent that a fire is required outdoors, especially if a wind should begin to blow before sunrise.

## Conquest and White Settlement

175 The Timbira country was simultaneously occupied by civilized newcomers along four distinct avenues of approach: (1) from São Luiz do Maranhão up the Mearim and Itapicurú; (2) from Pará up the Tocantins; (3) from Goyaz down the Tocantins; (4) from Bahia across the steppes to the northwest, across Piauhy.

Oddly enough, it was the last of these attempts at settlement that proved most potent and most significant for the Indians, for in the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth Bahia was a center for Portuguese colonization, while São Luiz, Pará, and Goyaz formed mere outposts.

The Portuguese probably did not come into close contact with the Timbira until after the expulsion of the French from the island of Maranhão. Then, in 1624, Bento Maciel Parente, notorious as a butcher of Indians, established a fort at the mouth of the Itapicurú, below the present town of Rosario, and afflicted the tribes of the vicinity by his slave raids.[1] Then followed Jesuit activity: in the 'sixties of the seventeenth century, the missionaries labored hard with the Guajajára, a Tupí tribe that at every opportunity fled back into the woods. They also had stations on the Itapicurú and Monim, but these failed to exert any influence on the savage Kaikaí and Urnatí suffering grievously from attacks by them. Throughout the remainder of the seventeenth century, indeed, until 1731, the Portuguese fought for the possession of northeastern Maranhão, between the Itapicurú and the Parnahyba. Whether the aborigines of that region included Timbira, remains unascertainable. At all events, the tenacious resistance of diverse Indian tribes rendered progress along this line relatively slow.

In the meantime the Jesuits, accompanied by military escorts, also entered the Tocantins area.[2] In 1763, a troop of Paulistas appeared, probably descending the Tocantins. They were headed by Pascoal Paes de Araujo, who enslaved the peace-

[1] Berredo, Annaes, 1:191. Saint-Adolphe, Diccionario, "Itapicurú Grande."
[2] Nimuendajú, The Apinayé, 1.

1: Nimuendajú E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SO8 Timbira SO8

## II. ECOLOGY

### Settlements and Houses

361 182 *Settlements.*—One of the most characteristic features of Timbira culture—in the natives' own opinion—is the circular village plan. So long as their aboriginal life retains a spark of vitality they cling to this mode of settlement, which is most intimately bound up with their sociocereмonial organization. Notwithstanding their ignorance of Indian usage, the Baptist missionaries in Brazil correctly recognized the social significance of this feature and did their utmost to effect its abandonment; for as long as it survives the ancient social order, too, lives on, and within that there is no place for missionaries. When the Canella transplanted their village to the site of Ponto in 1924, the Indian agent in Barra do Corda likewise tried to convince them that straight streets were far more beautiful, but he had the good sense to desist when the Indians vigorously spurned the proposal.

361 171 114 Snethlage has it that Pereira do Lago ascribes circular villages to the Gamella of Vianna, and Ferreira Gomes to the Krahõ', while Ribeiro is supposed to credit a semilunar form to the Timbira of Goyaz.[334] Actually Pereira merely reports round Gamella *huts*, without saying a word about their arrangement. Ribeiro, on the other hand, after stating that the Timbira encampments and settlements were invariably circular, goes on to say: "Alguns Indios de Goyaz edificam em meias lua." This doubtless refers to the horseshoe shape of Šavánte-Serénte villages. Finally, Ferreira Gomes, though mentioning circular settlements for the Krẽyé (then still near Imperatriz), never got to see any Krahõ', as he explicitly states: "... tres aldeas de indigenos mansos os quaes não foram vistos por mim .... estes indigenas são de duas nações, caraús e chavantes."[335]

361 183 The village (krĩ) site must fulfill the following conditions:

1. It must be level. Since level ground of adequate extent is hardly to be found on the slope in the direction of the watercourses, the villages are all situated on the level of the steppe, usually at the end of a spur projecting into the angle between two converging streams.

2. The ground should be neither rocky nor sandy, but represent an outcrop of hard clay, for on sand or rubble barefoot folk cannot dance in comfort, especially if they indulge with Timbira perseverance.

3. The site must not be too far from the water supply, though a difference of a kilometer does not matter.

4. There must be an adequate *palmeira* forest near by to provide clearings for a number of years. When the annual tree-felling has deforested the land to the distance of, say, twelve kilometers from the village, the settlement is transferred to a new site that has a sufficiency of timber in the vicinity.

5. Finally, attention is paid to freedom from fever, in which respect the Timbira steppes are, as a rule, favorably situated.

361 363 621 Ponto may serve as a typical steppe Timbira settlement. To be sure, its form lacks the geometrical perfection credited to it in Fróes Abreu's plan, and this author likewise fails to indicate that the village is elevated above the plain.[336] In 1930 it comprised thirty-one houses (ikré), all of whose broad sides faced the plaza. The diameter of the circle was 300 m. Along the front façade of the houses there extends all around the plaza a street (krĩkapẽ') of irregular width; it shall henceforth be designated as the "boulevard" (fig. 1). Its minimum width may be set at about 7 m. In front of the houses of the two vụ'tẹ' girls (see p. 92), which always lie opposite each other, the boulevard expands into a small dance ground. Because of

[334] Snethlage, Nordostbras. Ind., 152.
[335] Ferreira Gomes, Itinerario, 490, 495.
[336] Fróes Abreu, Terra das Palmeiras, 99, 168.

1: Nimuendajú E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SOS Timbira SOS



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the names of different plaza groups—in one case, even of distinct plaza moieties—to the same recipient.

Of twenty males, only four acquired their names from several donors. On the other hand, half of an equal number of females obtained theirs in this fashion, though only a single case involved a change of the rainy season moiety.

The woman numbered 20 below obtained the name Kra'napan, by which she is generally known, from the neighboring Krẽyé of Bacabal. This name is not to be transferred.

The list on pages 80, 81, and 82 gives the name series of twenty men and of twenty women with plaza group and rainy season moiety affiliations. Those names transferred by a single person are bracketed.

Some additional facts concerning name transference are given below.

Mĩkrõ'-Kapẽrtụ'k-Koprekré transferred his first name to the son of his sister's daughter. He hoped to pass on his other names to two other great-nephews, but had only one other, Čikapró, who had already received a name from another kinsman. After his great-uncle's death Mĩkrõ' junior claimed the two remaining names without himself using them, but with the prerogative of transferring them.

Terekwẹ'i-Piekóm passed on her first name to her paternal grandfather's daughter's son's daughter and died before being able to transfer the second. Terekwẹ'i junior claims the name Piekóm, but it must die with her because her brother's daughters have already all received names from other kinswomen.

Wakái did not pass his name on to his sister's son because he had no daughter on whom his sister Piekạ'ra might bestow her names.

Yaučẽkẹ' did not transfer her name to her brother's daughter because she died before her niece's birth.

### Exogamous Moieties

616

Each of these moieties occupies one-half of the village—the kọ'ikateye (kọ'i = east, hence: those of the east) the eastern part of the circle, the harã'kateye (harã = west, hence: those of the west) the western part, which in Ponto was somewhat larger. The children all belong to the mother's moiety. Although about a third of contemporary marriages are within the same moiety and the younger generation in part even deny the reality of the exogamous rule, the older people deprecate such shamelessness and the preponderance of exogamous unions among them proves that the principle survived until not very long ago.

The moieties are altogether equal in rank; specifically, the eastern moiety is in no way superior. Unlike the Šerénte equivalents the Canella units are not associated with sun and moon. Further, members are not distinguished by any external badges, and there is no trace of totemism.

616 182

The moieties under discussion centered solely in the maintenance of exogamy; their ceremonial significance is practically nil. Their decadence is probably due not so much to Neobrazilian influence or the diminishing population as to the pronounced predilection of the Canella for special dual divisions in connection with ceremonial. Comparison with the organization of other tribes suggests that the functions now allotted to the rainy season and the plaza moieties, respectively, were formerly associated with the *exogamous* moieties. The creation of independent dual divisions for these purposes inevitably stripped the exogamous halves of much of their importance.

616 114

Snethlage erroneously ascribes a separate chief to each of the moieties and wrongly regards the age classes as their subdivisions, whereas any one age class embraces members of both moieties. It is not true that the first and the second chiefs

1: Nimuendaju E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SO8 Timbira SO8



Apart from their functions at initiation, the plaza groups likewise figure at the tepyarkwá (Fish Song) festival, for throughout that celebration the east and the west groups run log races. In the solemnities themselves two societies perform—the me'kẽ'n (= Aquatic Birds) or Clowns; and the "Fishes" recruited from the six plaza groups, among whom the Bats are conspicuous.

The contemporary functions of this complex scheme of three eastern and three western groups with distinctive personal names, decorative paint, and meeting houses hardly warrant its existence. I consider it possible that the present plaza groups represent clans formerly localized within the village, that these units fell into genealogical confusion, but retained their ceremonial obligations. The Akwẽ-Šerénte, like the Bororo, have moieties composed of several localized clans with ceremonial functions. Possibly the Timbira moieties shared this feature in earlier times.

## Age Classes and Age Moieties

The age classes result from the boys' initiation, which accordingly requires discussion from a structural point of view, ceremonial aspects being reserved for treatment in a subsequent section.

All males pass through an approximately ten-year cycle of initiation. Those jointly initiated form a fixed lifelong age class: no one can resign or join a younger or older class. Thus, apart from the as yet uninitiated boys below, say, ten years of age, all males belong to some age class. In addition, the prospective novices at the next initiation organize in an unofficial class, mimicking so far as possible the youths' activities.

The four youngest and athletically active of the recognized classes occupy each a distinct place in the plaza, two on the east and two on the west side. This position automatically shifts with the lapse of time. Two successive entering classes always alternate as to the side of the plaza they enter: if the earlier is admitted on the east, the second inevitably goes to the west side about ten years later. With the appearance of a new class the survivors of the older active class on the same side leave the sport community, passing into the council, that is, into the very center of the plaza. The next older class of the side moves into the site thus vacated, creating in turn a gap that is filled by the newcomers. Ten years or so later the newly founded age class inaugurates a corresponding shift on the complementary side. Since the newcomers always enter on the north side, the transposition is invariably southward.

In figure 9 the as yet uninitiated boys are represented by a broken circle. The age mates completing initiation in a given year are designated as pepyé (warriors), and their position is marked by a double circle. The admission, shift, and exit of all surviving classes (as of November, 1935) are schematically represented; four classes now extinct figure with Arabic ciphers. It is thus possible to indicate the period of admission of the oldest men now living. However, the mechanism is adequately illustrated by the last three initiations (1913, 1923, 1933). All dates prior to 1923 are only approximate. Generally the span of a cycle is a decade, with positive or negative variations as great as two years.

In 1913 the cycle of age-class D (the present rópkama), which occupied the northwest site in the plaza, came to a close. Hence, the hitherto unofficial class E (the present kapranpotíkama) entered the scene opposite, that is, on the northeast, hitherto occupied by C (the present kokrụ'tkama). Hence C moved to the site of A (the present kukóekama), a class twenty years older and then the oldest of the four classes. Consequently the survivors of A left the racing association, passing into the middle of the plaza to become councilors.

1: Nimuendaju E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SO8 Timbira SO8



593 182 Apart from disturbances of this sort and others due to the men's intoxication, marital life pursues an extraordinarily even course. Matrilocal residence safeguards women from their husbands' tyranny, while the manifold masculine organizations militate against henpecking. No woman ever tries to keep her husband from taking part in performances of his organizations; and no man forbids his wife to join in all of the three daily dances. Undoubtedly the multiplicity of ceremonial units tends to separate spouses and promotes each one's acting independently of the other. Man and wife never proceed to a festival or ceremony jointly, each going by himself whenever his presence is required.

837 833 Many a Neobrazilian neighbor acts as though he had difficulty avoiding fornication with Indian girls constantly offered by their fathers. Snethlage[99] thus heard about a mulatto alleged to have secured the *jus primae noctis* of all the virgins in a Krahõ' village in return for an annual payment of a dozen head of cattle. In 1936 I spent a fortnight in the Krahõ' village of Pedra Branca. When I was about to leave, the inhabitants and, above all, chief Vicente Kratpẽ' made every effort to attach me to the tribe, for they had grasped my attitude toward ancient Indian usage and wanted to use me to oppose the Baptist missionaries. I was requested to wait until after a certain festival, but I answered that time would not permit this. Then the chief offered me a girl; I declined. In the evening he and his wife came to me with two girls of whom I was to select the one I liked better. However, both were village wantons, daughters of the chief's sister; and he offered them to me not because I was a transient visitor, but in my capacity of a prospective fellow tribesman and champion of tribal tradition.

548 626 On the other hand, I have known a Rąmkõ'kamekra who kept two young wantons, the daughters of a deceased sister, in his matrilineal home, and sold their favors to Neobrazilians. But when people began to gossip about his behavior, it was so vigorously condemned that he felt obliged to forego this source of income.

832 609 According to my observation young girls are the very ones to display a marked repugnance to Neobrazilians, especially if dark skinned and frizzy haired, since the strangers depart widely from the native ideal of manly beauty. Their clothing repels the lasses, their easy-going, sauntering gait seems ridiculous since a kind of dogtrot is prized as the acme of youthful dash; and altogether the inquisitive outsiders prove a disturbing element. If a Neobrazilian joins a bevy of girls, they soon begin to pass surly comments, and the one who best controls Portuguese speech bluntly asks what he wants and bids him depart. They delight in lying to such men, telling them the Indian men are likely to kill them, etc.

833 609 177 It is nevertheless quite possible that older wantons and perhaps an occasional married woman will yield access to civilized men; such cases hardly ever occur in the settlement, but only when the Indians scatter over their territory in small groups during the season before the ripening of the crops. At that time they are everywhere surrounded and hemmed in by Neobrazilians, camp in their immediate vicinity, and associate with them. Further, there was one woman in Ponto who was about thirty years old and was known to the Neobrazilians as Romana. She often spent weeks among them, was the only native woman addicted to drink, and had free intercourse with neighbors; the Indians shunned her, I think, from fear of venereal diseases.

### WANTONS.

837 562 554 The wantons (mentíapeyti) form—apparently among all those Timbira tribes that are still tolerably numerous and well organized—a recognized, though not organized class. According to old custom, girls are wantons if they did not marry as

[99] Snethlage, Nordostbras. 170.